4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

I remarked that the performance of this rite, not kept secret in the fold of the monastery but put completely on public display, was not very honorable for the intendants. The lamas answered, "When squeezed to the wall and when all other rites have been of no avail, the rite has to be performed." Such facts, without stretching the point, are really informative, concerning the type of the intendants.

The overriding importance attached to the appointment of the intendant, who can make a monastery flourish or ruin it, may be explained by the enormous influence exerted in a monastery by them, which matches that of the supreme chief of the institutions, and the stumbling blocks encountered by the intendants, which endanger the correct fulfilling of their office. They serve also to gain a true insight into the frame of mind of the administrative world of the monasteries.

MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE OF THE LAMASERIES

DOMAINS

During the Ming and the Ch'ing dynasties, large domains were granted to the monasteries to provide their means of subsistence. In former times it was easy for the emperors to be lavish in such grants in a sparsely populated country. I never had the opportunity to see the old deeds under which the vast domains of Erh-ku-lung and its flourishing subsidiaries had been granted. Its most important domain is that of the Fan-wu-pu, which it shares with its daughter monastery of Seerkok.[3]

The Chang-chia, T'u-kuan, and Sumpa Hutukhtus were the favorite Living Buddhas of the emperors. It seems an obvious assumption that private domains were also granted to each of them, because Chang-chia was able to found on his properties six branches and eleven villages. T'u-kuan founded seven villages and seven affiliates, while Sumpa founded five branches, and further it is said he disposed of more domains than both Chang-chia and T'u-kuan. The tax and rent revenues collected on their private properties must have been considerable because Chang-chia built nine oil and grain mills and T'u-kuan eighteen, in order to dispose of their grain.

[3] The Fan-wu-pu (the five tribes of barbarians) are situated in the region of Wei-yüan-p'u. They are: (1) Pei-tsui-pu (Narin valley), (2) Tsan-tsa-pu (east and west Tsan-tsa), (3) Hsieh-tsa-pu, (4) Pu-tsa-pu (near the mountains), and (5) Kuang-hua-pu (west of Wei-Yüan-p'u). The people living in these vast territories were the subjects of these two lamaseries, to which they paid taxes and rent, and were liable for corvées. All the villages from Pei-tsui-pu eastward (Ha-la-chih and Hung nai valleys) belonged to Erh-ku-lung; those westward to Seerkok. In 1910 both lamaseries still collected the rent of these fields, enjoyed the privilege of traveling for alms among these former subjects, and vindicated the right of still being invited by them for the performance of public and private religious activities. In that region the monastery of Erh-ku-lung had built twenty-four oil and grain mills. These domains were administered in former times by the important T'u-kuan and Seerkok Nang suo.

4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

Concerning Seerkok, the former subsidiary of Erh-ku-lung, it is recorded that it disposed of a property 45 miles (150 *li*) in length and 10 miles (30 *li*) wide.[4] Achia Hutukhtu of Kumbum collected taxes and rents from five tribes of farming Tibetans and the inhabitants of seven valleys.[5] The country for 200 *li* around Kumbum belongs to the monastery; several thousand "tame" barbarians are its subjects.[6] Achia Hutukhtu received from the emperor an extensive region for grazing his herds in Chahar (Inner Mongolia). The contract was written by order of the emperor in 1766.[7] Erh-ku-lung received land from the Ch'i T'u-ssu, where a lot of its subjects farmed. After the revolt of 1723, the Ch'i T'u-ssu responsible for the revolt of Erh-ku-lung lost his title and the subjects who farmed his land. Later he was given a chance to regain his title and subjects, if he could bring those who had revolted to submission. He succeeded, and recovered title and subjects, as described in Part I (p. 50).

It has been recorded that Ch'ü-t'an, which was the first lamasery founded by the Ming emperors, received wide domains so that it was able to build the two large branches of Yao-ts'ao-t'ai and Hung Shan-ssu (*Annals* of Hsining. ch. 15, p. 13). During the Ming dynasty large domains had also been granted to the Karwa and Nang-suo institutions, as noted above. Most of the minor Living Buddhas also possessed domains granted by T'u-ssu or wealthy people, or which they purchased themselves.

If account is taken of all these facts, it is easy to understand why the Chinese officials, who before 1723 could not collect taxes on all these vast domains, harbored an enormous jealousy, and why they exulted after the revolt when the emperor assigned the collection of these taxes to them. The text of the author of the *Annals* of Hsining records (chap. 31, p. 22) that " . . . in 1727, by decree, the emperor in one day, put an end to calamities lasting hundreds of years." This text, on the one hand, proves the rejoicing of the Chinese officials at that time; on the other hand, the loss of these enormous revenues impoverished the monasteries tremendously. The lamas, however, were very proficient in finding a means to cushion the shock to some extent.[8]

RENTS

After the revolt, the lamas could only receive the rent of their tenants in the way in which a rich landowner received them; but it was customary that the government receive the taxes, not directly from the tenants,

[4] *Meng-tsang Fo-chiao shih* 5: 123.
[5] *Ibid.*, 143.
[6] *Ibid.*, 11.
[7] *Ibid.*, 143.
[8] In 1948 according to the official data provided by the Bureau of the actual province of Ch'ing-hai (Hsining), only 177 of the 235 lamaseries, owned collectively about 500,000 *mou* (acres) of land and 5,000 to 6,000 head of livestock. Wang Wen-han, *Pien-chiang tung-kan* 1: 1–7, 1948.

[p.44(A)]

but from the landowner who, in case the tenant disappeared or became insolvent, was responsible for the tax. In this way the lamas who were landowners had to collect the official taxes from their tenants, and accompany the endless caravans of their tenants' donkeys carrying grain to the official granaries. Before the journey to the granary started, however, each tenant had to measure the grain in the presence of the lamas and with the measure supplied by the lamas, the capacity of which was greater than the official one; this enabled the lamas to set aside a valuable surplus over the vast amount of official taxes.

The properties of the lamaseries, consisting of extensive territories, contain a large part of waste and untilled land on which no taxes are imposed. The industrious intendants developed these properties by means of irrigation canals, and called in new farmers to till the new fields. The legal amount of taxes, however, has always remained the same as the initial amount, because the intendants, by means of collusion and bribery, easily succeed in gaining over the tax collectors. In this way the revenues of the intendancies are greatly increased, and they still receive surreptitiously a very large revenue. Moreover, they are able to store the surplus, which they can grind or sell when prices are highest.

HERDS

Sheep, cows, and horses constitute, for many intendancies, a source of revenue. Large herds are grazed in Kukunor or Mongolia where the pastures are larger, smaller herds in the country for local use. Mongol princes and Tibetan chiefs of tribes are always ready to help the monasteries. A contract is made with herdsmen by which the first calves, colts, and lambs belong to the owner, the second-born to the herdsman, and so on. Every three years a lama inspector of the intendancy examines the accounts of the herdsmen and settles with them the number of animals to be sold, and the herdsmen show the skins of the animals which died during the three-year period. If they cannot produce the skins of the dead animals it is assumed that they sold the animals and they must pay the owner of the herds.

OIL AND GRAIN MILLS

These mills are a large source of revenue. The monastery proper of Erh-ku-lung is owner of twenty-four oil and grain mills; the T'u-kuan himself has eighteen, Chang-chia nine. The mills are leased by Monguors or Chinese. The rent of oil mills is 300 pounds of oil for a season's use, besides which it must press the oil belonging to the monastery. The grain miller must grind the grain of the intendancy and at the New Year season give a pig weighing 120 pounds. Most of the oil which is not consumed in the kitchen in the preparation of food, or in the lamps in the temples and homes, is sent by raft to Lan-chou, the capital of the province.

[p.44 (B)]

The oil trade is a very important and lucrative business. Flour is sold in Hsining. The taxes imposed on the mills are very heavy, but the monasteries still enjoy the old privilege granted before 1723, and are exempted from these taxes. Even families in which a Living Buddha has been born enjoy the same privilege, for instance, the Lan family living in Hung nai tzu Valley. Every year, however, the family has to offer 10 pounds of oil at Erh-ku-lung to the intendancy of its Buddha, deceased a century ago. The lamas claim the privilege, which was granted during the Yung lo period (1403–1424), because oil is consumed in the lamps of the temples before the Buddhas, and flour is used by the lamas, the servants of Buddha.

792 [438] 434 651

FORESTS

Only two monasteries possess extensive forests—Seerkok and T'ien-T'ang. Because wood is very scarce in the northern part of the province, forests are an important source of revenue.

792 434 314

TOLL ON BRIDGES

The history of the famous bridge of T'ien T'ang has been recorded. For many years it was a source of large revenue, which finally caused its ruin.

792 434 [494]

The monastery of Kan-ch'an, belonging to the famous Tenma, receives toll on a raft, which ferries passengers across the Ta-t'ung River. Tenma is a very well-known man in the country. His first incarnation, a learned man, was appointed Fa-t'ai in Erh-ku-lung by the first Chang-chia (Huth, p. 279). It is related that he caused the ruin of Erh-ku-lung. In 1723 bLo-bzan bstan-dsin, chief of the revolt, was a prisoner in Hsining, and about to be executed. He heard that Tenma was in the city. Through the guardians of the jail, he implored him to write a letter to the Chinese generals in order to save his life. Tenma, unaware of the consequences of such an act, wrote the letter. The generals got the impression that Erh-ku-lung was mixed up with the revolt, and they destroyed the monastery. This is a fine story, manufactured on the ground out of whole cloth, in order to free the old mother monastery from blame, but why was the blame put on Tenma?

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For many years during the period of my stay, the young Tenma, swelling with ambition, was the most talked-of man in the country for his audacious plan to construct a European suspension bridge over the river, like those in photographs he had seen in magazines. He started buying all the available iron in the country, felling all the big trees growing on the domain of the monastery, and building a large brickyard. Blacksmiths, carpenters, and bricklayers worked for four years. He built four great towers, two on each side of the river. The blacksmiths made enormous iron chains, too heavy to manipulate or to move. He exhausted the entire treasure of the monastery. Troubles started

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among the intendancies and the impoverished lamas. Saddled with debts, and his plans not working out, he was compelled to give up his ambitious dreams and revert to the ancestral raft.

It is said that this holy man enjoyed the gift of bilocation. The people still state that many times many people saw him directing the shifts of blacksmiths and carpenters on the river, and at the same time saw him in ecstatic rapture in the temple.

It was after his financial collapse that he started the trouble with the disciple of his deceased intendant, which lasted for seven years, in order to retrieve his fortunes, only to land in jail in Seerkok. Finally, having debased his name and position of authority, he moved to one of his affiliates in the region of Kan-chou, where he was still living in 1920. Tenma was a typical figure in the world of Living Buddhas in 1910–1920.

COLLECTION OF ALMS IN FAR-OFF COUNTRIES

Expeditions to far-off countries are an important source of revenue. They last for several months and are organized by the various intendancies in their own behalf. Sometimes the supreme chief of a monastery accompanies the expedition. In 1914 T'u-kuan went to the region of the Yellow Tibetans (Uigurs) living around Su-chou. He left on the second of the second moon and was back at Erh-ku-lung in the tenth moon, with 124 cows, 146 horses, 90 sheep, and 2,000 taels. He seemed to be very happy when I visited him after the trip. During the troubles in 1940, T'u-kuan went to Mongolia, among the Urats, and traveled for four years. He visited me at Man-huei in Hou T'ao. He had a lot of trouble entering Hsining with 300 horses and 200 loaded camels because he was suspected of having had connections with the revolting Mongol, Te wang.

When I was in Kumbum in 1912 I met a returning expedition from Kukunor and Ts'aidam with 3,000 sheep, 260 horses, 140 cows, and loaded with butter, wool, skins, and yak hair. All the butchers from Hsining rushed to Kumbum to buy cheap cows and sheep. In December, 1914, I met a caravan of Kumbum returning from Kukunor and Ts'aidam with 6,000 sheep, 150 horses, and 200 cows. On the way they had lost 40 horses. They went to Hsining in order to bring suit against the chief of the tribe on whose territory the horses had been lost. The Amban settled the trouble in one session. He ordered that a kettle containing boiling oil be brought to him. Then he ordered both groups to grasp a one dollar piece he had thrown in the boiling oil. The lamas prostrated, apologized and implored for mercy, but the Tibetan chief tucked up his sleeves and went straight to the kettle. The gesture was sufficient for the Amban. The lamas received two hundred lashes, and were put into jail until a fine of two hundred dollars was brought to the court.

4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

In 1914, in Nien pe, I encountered the unusual case of a lama not enlisted in any monastery, who came back from Mongolia with 40 loaded camels, to the home of his brother in Kang-tzu Valley, after a trip which had lasted for sixteen years. The shrewd lama had collected alms for himself! He died a few days after his return. His brother thereafter was a rich man.

A large capital investment is required for such expeditions. The intendancies buy all kinds of things used by the nomad Tibetans and Mongols. They carry prayer books, paintings and statues of Buddhas, spoons, wooden cups, teapots, kettles, thread of all colors, needles, boots, cotton, silk, satin, combs, tobacco, saddles from Peking, bridles, stirrups, finger and ear rings, charm boxes, toothpicks, ear probers, tweezers, prickers (necessary for the performance of the toilet), cheap synthetic jewelry, and tea.

All these things are loaded on oxen and entrusted to loyal and dependable lamas of the intendancies who set out on the journey. All along the way they sell their wares, adding to each item a scarf of felicity, blessed by their Buddha at home. The trade is carried on by barter. They accept wool, skins, yak hair, butter, sheep, cows, and horses, claiming they are collecting alms. When the animals they collect along the way become too numerous, they hire Tibetans or Mongols to help drive them. Because they get twice or thrice the cost of the wares and because labor has little value, these expeditions are really remunerative. However, if it happens that a caravan of another intendancy precedes their own, and the Tibetans or Mongols do not need anything more, then "fishing after the net is a losing business"; but according to the figures noted above, the expeditions are usually very profitable.

TAXES

At the seasonal festivals, held on the grounds of the monastery, taxes are collected by the lamas from the merchants of the city, who pitch their tents and do business on their territory, and from the Tibetans and Monguors who sell animals and their primitive homespun products.

MONEYLENDING

Lending of money at the Chinese legal rate of 30 per cent interest is the most important source of revenue for the intendancies. The lending of money is far more remunerative than the purchase of land and mortgages, which afford more security. However, the intendancies prefer the bigger interest.

Intendancies dispose of capital to secure the annual subsidy granted to the lamas, the purchase of the important quantity of butter to be burned in the temple lamps, the expenses for the purchase of all the items required for the expeditions in Mongolia, Kukunor and Ts'aidam, and the expenses of the fixed festivals held at the monasteries. Besides these the intendancies dis-

[p. 46 (A)]

4: Schram M-S (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

pose of the amount of money provided from the various sources noted in this section.

Loans are made to Monguors, Tibetans, and Chinese, to shopkeepers, merchants in the city, in fact to anyone who provides serious guarantors. Two guarantors are always required, a lama and a layman.

The Chinese who lend money at the same legal rate of 30 per cent interest are very, very rarely entirely successful in this financial operation, and they know it before they start. After the third year, when the capital is nearly recovered, troubles usually start and new provisions are accepted for a smaller interest, or the problem is brought to the Chinese court of justice, which inevitably decides in favor of the poor party. In China it is the custom for the judge to decide in favor of the borrower and for the richer party to give up some of its rights and benefits. However, the inexorability of the lamas in collecting interest is an attested fact. The proverbs and sayings all over the country go: *"Chiu ming ti k'o-wo, sha-jen ti lama,"* meaning "even merchants who are so eager for money, save the life of a miserable man, but the lamas kill him"; also, *"lama chang nan la, p'o-niang chang nan la,"* meaning "It is not easy to be indebted to a lama, not easy to be indebted to a woman," because nobody can withstand the curses of a woman or the eagerness of lamas. Lamas are noted as loan sharks all over the country.

The people approach the lamas to borrow money and grain, because the people of the country are poor and the lamas dispose of money. On the twenty-fifth of the twelfth moon, the interest is due. In the evening, on the fifth of the moon, groups of young lamas gather in all the streets of the monasteries crying at the top of their voices that the interest has to be brought in by the twenty-fifth. They continue this crying for several days. With this notice the lamas' guarantors set out to find the persons whom they have guaranteed, as well as the layman guarantors, their partners. If they cannot find the hiding debtor, then on the twenty-fifth the lama is tied and lashed with ruthless severity until he pays the debt himself. If the debtor and layman are subjects of the monastery, they undergo the same rough procedure. No mercy is shown until the last farthing is extorted. Subjects do not dare bring suit against the lamas at the Chinese courts, because they cannot stand up against such a rich and influential opponent as the intendant. The lamas try to lend, if possible, to their subjects, to subjects of other monasteries, to T'u-ssu, or rich people who can provide a serious guaranty.

In the Orient, wealth and money are the mightiest factors of influence and power. In this respect the regulations of 1723, which were aimed at undermining and undoing the influence and power of the monasteries, failed almost completely. The monasteries are still the most influential and powerful institutions in the country.

[p. 46(B)]